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ABSTRACT

In Japan, objectives and content of high school language courses are stipulated in the National Curriculum of Japan or The Course of Study. The last major overhaul of this curriculum in language learning occurred in 1989, and it aimed at the enhancement of communicative competence and understanding of international relations. Accordingly, now subjects such as Aural/Oral Communication A, B, and C have been introduced. Aural/Oral Communication A (AOCA), which covers the area of daily conversation, is the subject of this case study. There has been great difficulty in implementing this curriculum, and the results have not been as good as hoped. It is argued that the root of the problem is curriculum implementation and a lack of teachers' ability or willingness to consider the real needs of the learners. The system is too hierarchical and top-down in orientation. This hierarchical system aims at equality and uniformity. The problem is that it runs into the reality of contemporary Japan--diverse students and high schools of varying quality. Teachers need to be freer to modify the curriculum to fit the needs of their students, and they need to be made aware of the potential benefits of deviating from a rigid national curriculum. (Contains 32 references.) (KFT)

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Customizing the Centralized AOCA Curriculum:

Syllabus Design from a Teacher's Perspective

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I. Introduction

In Japan, objectives and content of high school language courses are stipulated in the government's National Curriculum of Japan or *The Course of Study*. All of the current English language courses are based on *The Course of Study* announced in 1989, which especially aims at enhancement of communicative competence and understanding of international relations. Accordingly, such new subjects as Aural/Oral Communication A, B, and C have been introduced and are required. In the high school used as a case study, Aural/Oral Communication A (AOCA) is offered and covers the area of daily conversations.

Almost ten years have passed since the subjects were introduced; however, quite a few English teachers experience difficulty in teaching them. Some teachers explain this difficulty as a matter of inexperience; that is, most of the teachers are used to a traditional grammar translation method, so the new Aural/Oral Communication subject requires time and effort by teachers to develop other teaching methods. Other teachers ascribe their difficulties to the poor quality of textbooks that they find unattractive to students, although elaborations of textbook editors are noticeable in many places. However, if the problem lies with these explanations at all, they should have been solved after ten years of practice.

After looking into books and articles related to this problem, it is clear that the real root of the problem exists in the system of curriculum inplementation and also in a lack of teachers' knowledge of educational philosophy. The system of national curriculum is quite effective in that it guarantees equal quality and opportunity of education to every single student around the nation. Quite paradoxically, however, as a chain of command is always one way, that is, top-down, teachers are in danger of becoming mere messengers of commands from the top. In other words, English teachers are liable to teach only skills from the texts without remembering to consider the needs of learners, or, in a broader perspective, the growth of students. In fact, concern for students' growth should be given top priority because the sound development of students is the primary purpose of public education in Japan. It seems necessary to clarify these points; hence, in Chapter II this paper discusses the National Curriculum system, diversity of students, and the resulting grouping of high schools according to student quality.

In order to resolve the difficulty in teaching AOCA, teachers should be actively involved in the syllabus design of their own course. On this matter, Nunan's argument about

learner centred curriculum development (Nunan, 1988a) is insightful. Nunan describes the process of developing a school-based curriculum in detail from the learner centered perspective. Also, supported by the practical data collected from the Australian EFL/ESL programs, his ideas are more pragmatic. Yet, some consideration is necessary in adopting the proposed process. Apparently, there is a difference in situation between English language education in Japan and the English language program in Australia. That is, English language education in Japan is not an acculturation program such as ESL courses in the United States, Australia, and Great Britain, but one of the general education subjects. Taking these factors into consideration, Chapter Ⅲ explores the main principles needed to design a syllabus which is appropriate to the Japanese English classroom setting.

In Chapter Ⅳ, based on the syllabus design principles outlined in Chapter Ⅲ, syllabus objectives and materials specific to the case study students will be outlined. Finally, by drawing on the list of objectives and materials, a proto syllabus will be proposed. This will later become a working syllabus only after getting the opinions of teachers from the case study high school as the course usually offers the same quality of lessons to nine classes.

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1. In the literature of Applied Linguistics, the terms, curriculum and syllabus are used interchangably, depending on the view of researchers. To avoid confusion in meaning, this paper will follow Nunan's definitions as closely as possible: "'Curriculum' is concerned with the planning, implementation, evaluation, management, and administration of educational programmes. 'Syllabus', on the other hand, focuses more narrowly on the selection and grading of content." (Nunan, 1988b: 8)

II. The Suitability of The National Curriculum Across All Schools

More and more teachers find difficulties teaching English, which cannot be explained merely by the fact that the Japanese dwell in a monolingual society where no language other than Japanese is required in daily situations. The difficulty stems also from cumulative malfunction of the system although the national curriculum has been reexamined almost every ten years in keeping abreast of changes in the society. This chapter reviews the current system and explores its inapplicability in view of the diversity of high school students and the ranking of high schools.

A. The National Curriculum System

Objectives and content of every subject taught in elementary through secondary schools are announced in *The Course of Study*, or the National Curriculum. As *the Course of Study* in itself is quite concise, it serves as a proto type curriculum, besides being a public document that guides teachers to implement the objectives accordingly. As for the means of implementation, it consists of authorized textbooks that embody in concrete form what is written in *The Course of Study*.

According to the brochure published by the Ministry of Education, textbooks are defined thus: "Textbooks in use must be either those authorized by the Minister for Education [sic], Science, Sports and Culture or those compiled by Monbusho itself. In the authorization of textbooks, the Minister for Education approves books compiled and edited by the private sector which are deemed suitable for use as textbooks." (Monbusho, 1999: 29) As Suwabe (1997) points out, as a result of this system, authorized textbooks provide high quality learning materials, which are readily useful in classes.

Suwabe also claims that there are three levels of curricula in this system: standard curriculum, substantial curriculum, and practical curriculum. First, the standard curriculum is a national curriculum consisting of an administration component enacted by School Education Law enforcement regulations, the syllabus component shown in *The Course of Study*, and the assessment component. Second, the substantial curriculum is equivalent to the authorized textbooks. The third curriculum is organized by school administrators and teachers, based on the former two curricula. It also includes curricula for the purpose of research. (ibid)

Although he suggests the possibility of the third type of curriculum, in reality the number of such school-based curricula is scarce. His explanation of this phenomenon is that

what restrains teachers from creating their own curriculum is the force of well prepared textbooks. "Although curriculum is not stated explicitly in the textbooks, the editors' intention is easily perceived through such elements as arrangement of topics and linguistic materials, the way to teach language, methods of communicative activities, and so on." (Translated from the Japanese, Suwabe, 1997: 107) As a result, teachers simply follow what is written in the textbooks, and in some cases, without even re-examining the textbook editors' intention.

As the teachers' inattention progresses, wherein teachers become mere messengers of knowledge and skills, any sense of responsibility as an educator gradually decreases. Because promoting sound development of youth is an important mission for those who engage in public education, this situation can be seen as perilous. In order to ameliorate the hazard, it is necessary for an English teacher to be able to articulate the significance of learning English in relation to the development of students. Indeed, such fundamental a question as what is expected of language education is hard to answer; however, without an educational philosophy on the part of each teacher, curriculum innovation is unachievable, even at the third level of curriculum, a problem discussed in the next chapter.

To summarize, the implementation system of the National Curriculum functions relatively well to the extent that the intention of the government is transmitted clearly to each school level. However, the cumulative effect of detailed and overly-prepared textbooks hinders teachers from developing teaching materials of their own. Moreover, there exists the danger for English teachers to become unaware of the pedagogical aspects of English education. In addition, feedback from actual classes, where teaching and learning take place, is not easily reflected in the curriculum. This situation is even more problematic when we take into account the diversity of students.

B. Diversity of Students

One of the characteristics of Japanese high schools is the seeming homogeneity of academic ability in schools. In fact, strongly influenced by an academic and career-oriented society, high schools as well as colleges, are ranked strictly according to the achievement levels of students. Consequently, motivation for learning varies correspondingly from school to school. As for motivation for learning English, it is highly dependent on entrance examinations of colleges, which require without many exceptions that examinees be tested on English. That means whether the examinee will study liberal arts or science, s/he will still have to take an

English examination. While it is true that not all the English learners are motivated only by the entrance examination, the proportion of intrinsically motivated learners is low. According to a survey by the Ministry of Education, almost 50% of high school graduates attended college in 1998. (Monbusho, 1999: 22) Hence, nearly half of all high school students needed English to enter colleges. Because of the high school ranking system mentioned above, some schools hold more students who seek higher education. Others have students who want to go to vocational schools. Still others are filled with students having difficulty in keeping up with high school education.

C. Ranking of High Schools

The high schools under consideration can be termed "high," "intermediate," and "low" respectively, for convenience, and are described by the distinctive features of each group.

First of all, in the "high" group of high schools, a large majority of students are well motivated, i.e. they need English mostly for the entrance examination because more than 90 % of the students will attend higher education. The students have good learning strategies, adequate world knowledge, and a high level of motivation. Therefore, in a language class, they are apt to have much more intake compared to those students in the "intermediate" and "low" schools. Their main concern is to pass the entrance examinations of prestigious colleges, which require a high standard of correct grammar and ability to understand difficult reading; therefore, teachers in these schools tend to emphasize grammatical exercises and intensive reading of various types of essays.

There has been a huge debate on the merits and demerits of entrance examinations; however, any drastic change has not happened so far. From this, at least one thing is quite clear: many of those who plan and prepare entrance examinations consider conventional English examinations are quite appropriate to test applicants' scholastic aptitudes. In other words, selection of students is congruent with the expectation of college instructors, since English examinations require not only grammatical knowledge but also general competence such as the ability to think, ability to understand, and world knowledge. So far, there seems to be no alternative to such tests for demonstrating multiple abilities.

Some critics say that entrance exams preclude teachers from enhancing communicative ways of teaching English. It is true that a large portion of lessons is devoted to reading and grammar exercises, but grammar and lexis are indispensable knowledge for speaking as well as

reading. If a student has an intrinsic motivation for speaking, s/he can expand his/her knowledge of speaking and listening with an extensive course outside the school. Thus, quite a few students acquire a larger fundamental knowledge of the language and they increase their potential to gain a solid command of spoken English. Besides, entrance examinations endow an ironic backwash effect on students. Without such examinations, it would be doubtful whether a high level of motivation would be attained among students.

The goal of the second group of students, those in "intermediate" high schools, is almost the same as the first group. A large difference, however, lies in the achievement levels of subjects they took in junior high schools. Because of their lower degree of learning strategies, ability to understand and so on, they are relatively discouraged in learning, compared to those students in "high" level schools. Consequently, their motivation level is lower. In order to fill the gap that began in junior high school, those schools usually increase credit hours of English and offer extra-curricular classes of English. In other words, teachers try to compensate for the lack of ability by the amount of time taken in learning. However, the intention does not always bring the results, so both teachers and students are likely to be frustrated.

The third group are the "low" schools where students lack motivation not only for English but also for other subjects. As most of the students will have a job, go to vocational schools or junior colleges after graduating from high school, there is no practical need for studying English. There are various reasons why they have been distracted them from learning, such as family environment, financial predicament, and illness. However, the bottom line is that not everyone is equally talented in learning. Therefore, if teachers demand the same standards, both qualitatively and quantitatively, as in other high schools, students will become indifferent to learning itself. English education without any aim but for entrance examinations may never attract those students.

In summary, because of the high school ranking system, teaching English works well in some schools, despite a certain amount of problems and difficulties, while in other schools, English education does not work and may even create a predicament for students. In order to cope with this problem of the diversity of students, there is a range of textbooks and the selection of textbooks is left to the discretion of each school. Nevertheless, the authorized textbooks are not varied enough to be compatible with the wide variety of learners.

Ⅲ. Considerations in Curriculum Design for the Japanese English Classroom

A. The Purpose of Teaching English

Why do we have to learn English? This is a typical question of a high school student who begins to experience difficulty in learning English. Interestingly enough, students rarely apply the same question to other subjects, as in "Why do we learn history?," or "What's the point of studying biology?" and so on. There seems to be two explanations to this phenomenon. First, as students are offered English only starting in junior high school (the 7th grade), they may think that English is something optional. Indeed, for those who are not good at school work, English might be an optional burden. In other words, students take other subjects for granted whether they are difficult or not. Second, English is a subject which is closely related to practicality, but whether or not it will be put into practice is highly dependent on the environment and future orientation of a student. If the real purpose of English education lies in practicality, they should decide to learn it that way.

In this context, the purpose of learning/teaching English has been argued for many years not only on the local level above but also on the national level. If we look over major points at issue on the latter level, they can be roughly divided into two; those arguments that are in favor of practicality, and those taking English education as an essential contribution to development of learners. In this chapter, both arguments are examined and, henceforth, a basic philosophy is constructed from the perspective of a teacher. That type of philosophy is pointed out in the first chapter as being scarce in the field of English education.

B. Argument 1: English for Practical Use

It goes without saying that language is a characteristic of a human being and that it has developed as an essential means of communication. However, there are other functions to it. Iwasaki(1972) identifies four functions: cognition, communication, thought, and creation. A human being recognizes things, conveys meaning, thinks, and creates literature by means of language. Then, why is only the function of communication highlighted in the field of language education? At least two grounds for the argument can be found; one is from the applied linguists and researchers who are in favor of such approaches as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Natural Approach; the other group's argument is based on national interest.

To begin with, the impacts of CLT and the Natural Approach were so strong that they permeated rapidly the field of language teaching. Those approaches are introduced not only in teacher training courses but also at seminars for teachers. Larsen-Freeman (1986) cites the following three points in regard to CLT. First, the language is used with a communicative intention. Second, authentic materials are used for the purpose of comprehending language in actual use. Finally, activities are practiced in small groups of students. On the other hand, the basis of "Natural Approach" lies, as Krashen states, in the distinction between "acquisition" and "learning." In his explanation, "acquisition" is "a process similar, if not identical, to the way children develop ability in their first language," whereas "learning" is "conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them." He further claims that not only children but also adult language learners take in language through acquisition. (Krashen, 1982: 10) Both of these approaches cast a light on fluency as a primary goal for language learners; hence, they have attracted the theorists and practitioners dissatisfied with conventional methods which favored accuracy over fluency.

The second group, who argues the purpose of language education from the standpoint of national interest, is also in favor of practicality of language learning. Therefore, advocates of this opinion are mostly from either the political world or the business world. In today's highly internationalized world today, English plays the role of a tool for communication. Therefore, they strongly demand the training of highly proficient English speaking personnel who can negotiate political and economical issues with people around the world. To this end, some extremists proclaim the vision that English is to become the second official language of Japan.

Overall, proposals from the different fields at least share common ground to the extent that they shed light on the fundamental function of a language, that is, as a means of communication. Therefore, their arguments are straightforward and clear but further examination is needed when the proposal is reviewed within the framework of public education. For one thing, learners need a large amount of time to acquire English language even if new and improved approaches are introduced. According to Jackson and Kaplan, the Foreign Service Institute estimates 2,200 hours of intensive training for American government personnel to be efficient in Japanese, compared to 575 to 600 hours of training needed for "languages closely cognate with English," such as French, German, Italian, etc. (paper handout from WATESOL

Convention, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, 2000) In addition, these approaches are intended for those target learners who have both the need and the opportunity to speak English in their daily lives in English-speaking countries, such as immigrants, foreign work force, and foreign students.

Even if the programs based on these approaches were successful enough to make English language the second official language in Japan, the expected blue print would not always be idealistic but rather chaotic. Yamaguchi (2000) warns about this issue that English should become the second official language by taking examples of "Pidginization" and "Creolization", which have extinguished native languages all over the world. Indeed, when it comes to public education, policy, discretion and deliberation are needed.

C. Argument II: English for Educational Development

So far, practical aspects of language education have been examined. At the other end of the practicality continuum, there is a view that the purpose of language education is to contribute to the sound educational development of students. This view is not only advocated by educators and scholars but also stated in the first article of the Basic Education Law. In other words, this view is quite evident as long as English education is practiced in public education. The key issue here, therefore, is the answer to the question how English education contributes to development of students.

Since the perspective that English education enhances development of youth is perceived empirically rather than proven from numerical data, it is often difficult to convince learners. Sometimes an allegory would serve better than theoretical explanation. Toyama presents an allegory which he jocularly named "Eigo Kyouiku Hiryou Ron," or Fertilizer theory of English Education. The following is a translated summery of his "theory": "Suppose you are a farmer and grow a radish. When your radishes sprouts out, you won't leave them, expecting their natural growth. Instead you will supply fertilizer, even if it takes time and money. Every farmer knows that fertilizer is necessary to grow radishes even though not all the farmers can explain how it works. We could find some similarity between fertilizer and English Education." His allegory extends further to the principal effect of fertilizer: "Fertilizer supplies the soil with what it lacks. For acidic soil, they provide alkali fertilizer. The same is true in education. It is unnecessary to teach what students acquire naturally. Rather to provide what is unattainable in

natural condition is the mission of education.[...] As native language is so natural, unconscious, and practical, the theory that the native language is a language is sometimes dismissed. On the contrary, foreign language provides us a large amount of resistance and stimulation. Because of the lack of familiarity, it is all the more educationally effective."(The original written in Japanese, Toyama, 1972: 32 - 36) From his allusion, it becomes clear that English education stimulates students' ways of thinking which would, otherwise, be biased toward mono-lingual, mono-cultural ones.

There are various type of objectives proposed in accordance with the view that English language learning is one of the public education subjects. Among them are meta-cognitive knowledge, cross-cultural awareness, a logical way thinking, development of left hemisphere of a brain, etc. However, all of these proposals seem to derive from the second language learning experience described above that learning English gives students the opportunity to become aware of other language and culture outside Japan.

D. Summary

As English language education discussed in this paper is among the public education subjects, it seems valid enough to conclude that the priority should be placed on English for students' development. However, this conclusion does not necessarily lead to the denial of teaching practical aspects of the language, that is, that students should learn it to the level on which they can experience different culture and different language use. Nevertheless, a broader pedagogical intention is required for curriculum developers and teachers to do their work. Obviously, courses that offer useful expressions for tourists do not fulfill the goal of public education. Moreover, the degree of developmental process differs from one student to another, and selection of language learning objectives leaves room for discussion at the classroom level, which will be explored in the following chapters.

IV. Principles of Syllabus Design

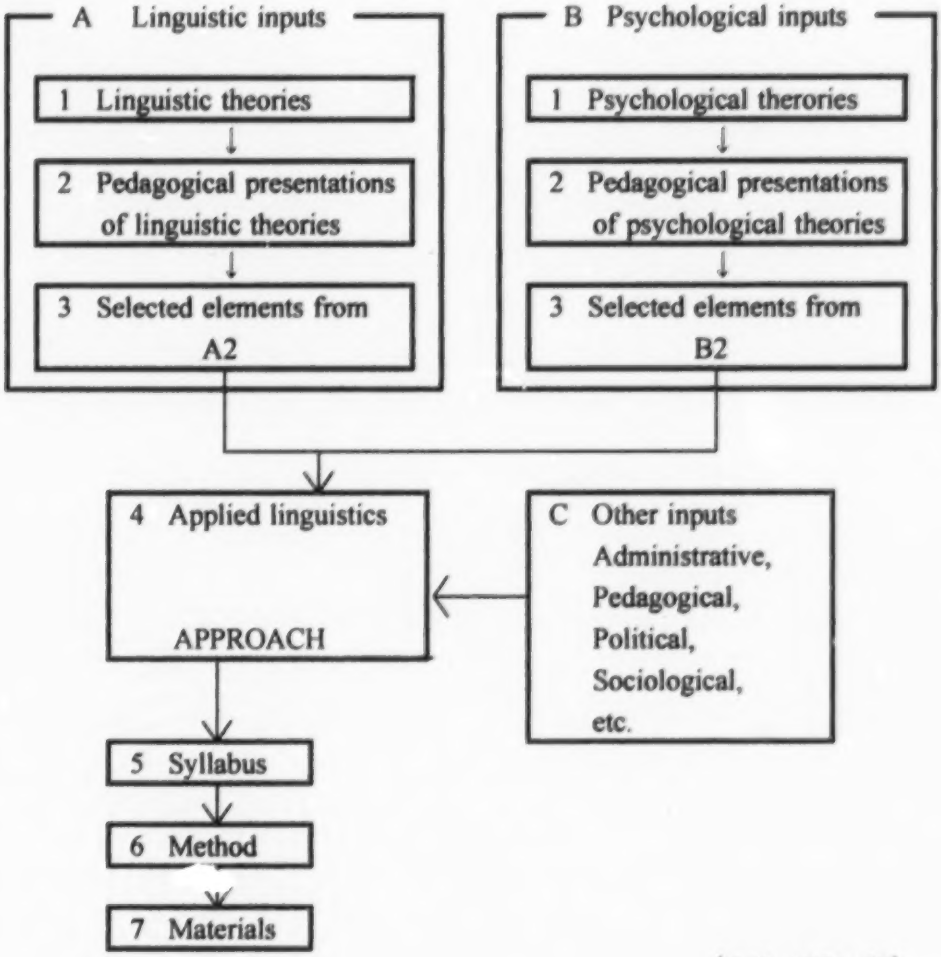
In the previous chapters, the unique nature of English language education in Japan has been discussed. The problems are closely related to public education and the discussion has been general and broad ranging. However, in this chapter, addressing one of the underlying problems, the focus is on a specific course, AOCA, and guidelines from accepted syllabus design theory is used to derive suitable AOCA syllabus objectives. In doing so, Bell's diagram, "The Genesis of an Approach in Applied linguistics," (Figure 1) which illustrates the relation between theories and syllabus, gives some direction to the discussion. It becomes clear from this diagram that syllabus is derived from "APPROACH" which has its basis in Box 4 "Applied Linguistics," which relies on three types of inputs as its supporting principles: "Linguistic inputs," "Psychological Inputs," and "Other Inputs." (A, B, and C in the diagram)

Because the diagram presents "Approach" as a purely theoretical notion, some interpretation becomes necessary when designing a syllabus for AOCA. For one thing, because the so called "Approach," illustrated in the diagram, is based on pure theory, it is likely to determine classroom instruction consistent with the theory. As a result, the approach is imposed on teachers and learners, and is often considered burdensome by teachers. In addition, after seeing several so-called approaches prosper and fail without leaving much improvement, but requiring vain effort, teachers become indifferent to such approaches. Therefore, it would seem fruitful instead to adopt an eclectic collection of principles as long as they have proven empirically and pragmatically valuable. In fact, there are some teaching techniques, which originally derived from now out-of-date theories, still used in the classroom because they have empirically proven useful. For example, "pattern practice" is still commonly used long after "the Audio-lingual Method" has declined. In short, the teachers' perspective and experience should be taken into consideration in designing the approach leading to a syllabus for Suwabe's third level of curriculum. (see p.3)

Another necessity for some interpretation is that Box C "Other inputs" must be more predominant as to limit A2 and B? when the working level syllabus is defined. So far, the National Curriculum, pedagogical aspect, and political influence have been taken into account. The specific situation of learners and administrative regulations also work as two of the determiners of selecting objectives.

Based on the assumptions above, it is better to begin with "Other inputs," and then to look at "Linguistic inputs" and finally "Psychological inputs" when framing and evaluating suitable AOCA objectives for the case study high school.

Figure 1.



(Bell, 1981: 29)

A. AOCA Objectives in *The Course of Study*

In *The Course of Study*, the objectives of AOCA are defined to promote competence both in comprehending what the other interlocutor is saying, and in speaking one's ideas in a daily situation as well as to enhance such attitude as to actively participate in communication. (Ministry of Education, 1989) Plain interpretation of the objective would be to raise learners' competence in speaking and listening to the level of daily life conversations and, at the same

time, to encourage students to participate actively in such conversations. However, in reality, the considerations listed as "Other Inputs" will influence the objectives. Viewing these considerations within a case study framework clarifies the process.

B. AOCA in High School - A Case Study

In this paper, attention will be focussed on a specific high school in Shizuoka Prefecture. The school serves as an excellent case study of a school impacted by all the problems resulting from the National Curriculum system described previously. (see p.3) Since the school is located in a suburban area, the distribution of students' competence is relatively wider, ranging from "low" to lower "intermediate," if the high school ranking criteria presented in Chapter 1 is applied. About a third of the students proceed to colleges and junior colleges. Another third go to vocational schools, seeking qualifications for computer operation, cooking, haircutting, bookkeeping and so on. The other third find jobs, the majority of which deal with factory labor and sales. As for the probability of the graduates using English either for work or in daily lives, the chances are extremely low. Accordingly, students' motivation for English language learning is low: unless a teacher can attract their attention, students are likely to sleep, distract others, and chat during classes.

C. Bell's APPROACH Inputs and Their Impact on Syllabus Objectives

1. "Other Inputs"

a. Administrative

There are two levels of administration between the Ministry of Education and teachers, namely, the Prefectural Board of Education and the principal of each high school. When working with the curriculum, it is common that the principal defers to the committee whose members are head teachers of each subject, so that the opinions of teachers are adequately taken into account in decisions made at the school level. In any case, regulations of course offerings arise at either level of administration. Among them, four regulations can be considered controlling factors in designing a syllabus. First, AOCA is offered to the first year students (10th graders). Second, the standard number of credits is two, which means there are two fifty-minute classes per week, approximately 60 to 63 classes in a year. Third, it is a mandatory subject for every first year student. Finally, if a student drops the credit, s/he will remain in the same grade regardless of how high a GPA s/he has.

b. Pedagogical

The Pedagogical component from Bell's diagram takes different forms depending on what kind of institution the curriculum developer is working in. Obviously, those who deal with English for Specific Purposes have a different interpretation of pedagogy from those engaged in General English language learning. Whether the English teaching institution is private or public can also affect pedagogy. In this paper, the pedagogical intention is restricted to public education practiced in the particular case study high school leading to the design of a suitable syllabus. Concerning pedagogical intention in General Purpose English teaching, Widdowson proclaims that education "seeks to provide for *creativity* whereby what is learned is a set of schemata and procedures for adapting them to cope with problems which do not have a ready-made formulaic solution." (Widdowson, 1983: 19) This view of Widdowson is quite congruent with the argument for developing a teachers' philosophy made in Chapter II . Articulating the pedagogical intention this way not only leads to clarification of the AOCA course, allowing teachers to gain confidence in what they are doing, but also sheds light on the wider scope of education, that is, life-long education because of its implication of future prospect.

First, the significance lies not in inclusion of the pedagogical intention but in the conviction of a teacher regarding the notion, because the confidence of a teacher comes from the premise that what s/he offers in the course is meaningful to students. A teacher cannot be confident without such a premise, even if s/he possesses a large amount of knowledge about the English language. Evidently, as teaching deals to some extent with the imposition of the course material onto students, lack of teacher confidence results in smaller amount of intake from a learners' side. On the other hand, the presence of confidence promotes the attractiveness of the course materials, for the teacher can re-examine and re-arrange them in every other way as long as s/he is sure of the end results coming from those materials. This is especially meaningful in the case where teachers can often be discouraged by lower motivation of students.

Second, as the pedagogical intention refers to the effect of learning in the long view, high surrender value is greatly expected, especially in life-long-learning circumstances common today. Expected payoffs are first, a wider view of the world offered by the cross-cultural awareness, and two, a foundation for extended education. Aside from formal language education at public schools, there are other language learning locales and educational media. These include

private English conversation schools, correspondence courses, radio programs for language learning, publications which assist self-learning, and so forth. Even the Internet provides self-learning opportunities. Thus, to offer basic skills and knowledge of English conversation gives learners an advantage when they resume learning English in the future.

2. Linguistic Input

Insights from the field of linguistics usually include theories on how people acquire/learn a language, or, correspondingly, how to teach a language because language acquisition is one of the main study fields of linguists. However, since the current concern of this paper rests on *what* to teach rather than *how* to teach, it would be better to rely on findings that shed light on extracting concrete teaching materials from theory. As the objective of AOCA is enhancement of communicative competence, a definition of communicative competence provides the clues to sort out concrete objectives.

D. Canale's Communicative Competence Framework

Canale's framework of four components of communicative competence is useful. The four components are "grammatical competence," "sociolinguistic competence," "discourse competence," and "strategic competence," respectively. First, "grammatical competence" includes such factors as "vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics." The second component, "sociolinguistic competence," refers to the capability of appropriate language use both as a sender and as a receiver of a message. The third component, "discourse competence," relates to *cohesion* and *coherence* in utterances and writings. Hence, such devices as "pronouns, synonyms, ellipsis, conjunctions and parallel structures" are included in this component. Finally, "strategic competence" enables a speaker to repair a conversation when it breaks down. (Canale, 1983: 6 - 14)

By using the four components of his definition as a guide, it is possible to identify crucial factors to consider when setting syllabus objectives.

1. Grammatical Competence

Grammar is an area which traditionally receives high emphasis in language learning, so most teachers and learners believe that learning grammar is a fundamental step in learning a second language. Consequently, grammar is explicitly taught in the other courses of language education, i.e. English I, English II, Reading, and Writing. For that reason, in AOCA, it seems

reasonable to limit the teaching of grammar to the minimum essential for communication, leaving detailed grammar learning to other courses. Such minimum essentials seem to lie in the areas where discrepancies in rules are wide between L1 and L2. Examples of these major discrepancies in Japanese and English can be found in areas such as word order, as follows:

【 Sentence Structures 】 In English, basic sentence structure is *subject - verb - object*, whereas *(subject) - object - verb* in Japanese. (The *subject* is often omitted in Japanese.) By the same reason, such structures as *subject - verb - indirect object - direct object* and *subject - verb - object - complement* need reinforcement in activities in AOCA.

【 Prepositional Phrase 】 In English, a preposition is put before a noun; thus, the combination of a preposition and a noun forms a prepositional phrase. The Japanese counterpart of a preposition is attached to the end of the noun. This simple difference precludes learners, especially those in a beginner level, from comprehending a prepositional phrase as a chunk, and this becomes a huge deficit both in listening and speaking. Therefore, reinforcement of prepositional phrases enables learners to create wide range of propositions, such as spatial relations, time, quantity, and modification of nouns.

【 Post Modification 】 In Japanese, modifiers are put before modified noun phrase, whether the modifier is a phrase or a clause. For example, the equivalent Japanese for the phrase "the book I bought yesterday" would be "the I yesterday bought book." Interference from this L1 rule leads learners to generate an awkward sentence, which sometimes makes no sense. Those are the points where teachers and learners find difficulty, though they may appear very simple to native speakers of English. Evidently the mere presentation of grammatical rule is far from learning it. Rather, it would be effective to present the situation where post modification is suitable and required. Furthermore, in order for intake to take place, such exercises should be repeated from time to time, in other words, cyclical learning is desired.

2. Sociolinguistic Competence

In the early stages of language learning, learners tend to be more concerned with grammatical correctness over appropriateness of utterance in a given context. In fact, they do not have enough repertoire to consider alternative expressions. In the meantime, learners come to believe that there is only a one-to-one relationship between an expressions in L1 and one in L2. It is thought that this false assumption hinders learners from acquiring sociolinguistic

competence. Therefore, turning learners' attention to the functional meaning of an utterance must be the first step in making them aware of appropriateness within a given context. In the next stage, i.e. the practice stage, learners may choose an inappropriate expression in a given context, which evokes an unexpected reaction of the other interlocutor, or a correction by the teacher. This experience is more meaningful for helping learners to acquire sociolinguistic competence than the mere presentation of expressions appropriate to the context.

To begin with, a learner's consciousness of functional meaning derives from the presentation of teaching materials together with functional meanings. To accomplish this purpose, it is desirable to apply a functional/notional framework, in which objectives are marked with communicative functions. Following is a list of categories of such functions manifested by Wilkins:

- Modality - certainty, necessity, conviction, volition, obligation incurred, obligation imposed, and tolerance
- Moral evaluation and discipline - judgment, release, approval, disapproval
- Suasion - suasion and prediction
- Argument - information asserted and sought, agreement, disagreement, denial, and concession
- Rational enquiry and exposition - e.g. implication, hypothesis, verification, conclusion, condition, result, explanation, definition, cause, etc.
- Personal emotions - positive and negative
- Emotional relations - greeting, sympathy, gratitude, flattery, and hostility
- Interpersonal relations - status (formality) and politeness

(Wilkins, 1979: 88 - 89)

The headings of the list are supposed to cover all the functions that English speakers use. It is hard to find an exhaustive list of subcategories of those headings; however, the presentation is clear enough to extract objectives for beginner-level students and, subsequently, to organize them into the AOCA syllabus. The criteria for the selection process is the frequency of use in daily life, and the degree of discrepancy and dissimilarity between L1 and L2.

Second, miscommunication following the learner's incorrect choice of expressions for a given context provides an effective means for consciousness raising and enhances intake. Yet, the likelihood for such miscommunication to occur in a limited amount of time will not be

abundant enough. In order to suffice, the next best plan is a simulated way; either directly presenting examples of miscommunication or giving learners a delusive situation. Those activities enable learners to think about the cause of miscommunication, which serves as a catalyst to raise their awareness. It is also important to advert to the fact that miscommunication is caused not only by linguistic feature but also by prosodic and kinesic representations.

3. Discourse Competence

Discourse competence includes such devices as cohesion and coherence of language use, which are focal points in a writing course. In terms of appropriateness in a context, this component overlaps with sociolingustic competence to some extent. As far as the skills of speaking and listening are concerned, this component includes the notions of *adjacency pairs* and *logical representation of ideas* in English language.

An adjacency pair is a pair of utterances that has cohesive inevitability. For example, when one interlocutor asks a question, the other will answer it. In the same manner, if one greets, the other will greet back. Although English language and Japanese language share the common ground concerning adjacency pairs to some extent, there certainly are discrepancies between two languages. Therefore, teachers should keep this in mind and point out the difference if necessary.

Next, logical representation of ideas means such ways of presenting idea that a topic comes first, followed by details or that proposition is stated before the reason. Knowledge of this component build both cross-cultural awareness and practical use of English language. Although having been neglected in the English language education in Japan, this notion of logical representation of ideas should be included in the AOCA syllabus, concurrently with such activities as stating opinions and making a speech.

4. Strategic Competence

This component consists solely of communication strategies (CSs) which are compensatory strategies taken for repairing conversational breakdown. In this case, the cause of the breakdown is mostly from lack or slip of memory of lexical items. Therefore, mastering communication strategies is particularly important for second language learners because such breakdowns are quite common in classrooms.

Different types of CSs are used, depending on a learner and a situation. Tarone classifies types of CSs and presents them in taxonomy, which has two divisions: Avoidance strategies and compensatory strategies. Avoidance is either "Topic Avoidance" - - the learner simply avoids the topic in which s/he expects an unknown words or ideas, or "Message Avoidance" - - the learner stops the utterance on the way because of an unknown word. Under compensatory strategies, there are two sub-divisions: paraphrase and borrowing. The former is a target language based strategy which includes three sub-categories: approximation, word coinage and circumlocution, respectively, while the latter consists of L2 based strategies or the nonverbal: literal translation, language switch, appeal for assistance, and mime. The definitions of the terms are as follows:

Paraphrase

• Approximation - - the use of a single word in place of an unknown word. In this case, a learner knows that the word is not correct but s/he hopes to convey proximate meaning.

• Word Coinage - - the learner creates a new word so as to convey a concept.

• Circumlocution- - the description of the object that the learner does not know by its name. It is different from approximation because s/he uses phrases or clauses instead of using a single lexical item.

Borrowing

• Literal Translation - - application of a literally translated word, which does not make sense in the target language context. However, it is likely to be observed in a discourse between L2 speakers or between a native speaker and an L2 speaker.

• Language Switch - - intentional use of an L1 word. It is more likely to happen when L1 and L2 are close in the same language family, such as English and French.

• Appeal for Assistance - - a request for a proper word. This is very common in L2 classes.

• Mime - - use of non verbal communication

(Tarone, 1983: 61 -63)

Using the taxonomy above, particular types of CSs that learners are likely to utilize can be identified, and at the same time, it is possible to pinpoint CSs which will enhance their communicative competence. In the classroom, "message avoidance," "appeal for assistance," and "mime" are noticed frequently. On the other hand, "language switch" is the least likely because

of the total difference between two languages in lexicon. Taking the above into account, it is, then, anticipated that promoting the use of such CSs as "approximation" and "circumlocution" will lead to an improvement of communication activities in the classroom.

More precisely, two ways of integrating CSs into classroom activities were found to be effective. One is introducing holistic words and hedges to eliminate "avoidance." For example, if a student cannot say a specific name of a fish, s/he is likely to keep quiet, partly because of the assumption that there should be an exact translation, and partly because of the fact that the Japanese language has more than 30 common names for fish. In this case, the solution using a CS seems to be quite simple - - a combination of hedge *a kind of* and holistic word *fish* will satisfy his/her demand. Second, since there is no post modification in Japanese syntax, students try to avoid using such structures as relative pronouns, relative adverbial clauses, and adjectival to-infinitives. However, if they learn to use those with the CS, "circumlocution," they will notice the important function of those difficult structures, and henceforth, try to use them. In this way, the application of CSs should work effectively.

E. Bell's Psychological Inputs

In second language learning as well as other learning in general, it goes without saying that applying psychological theories to practical situations is profitable to both teachers and learners. Moreover, psychological theories are no less influential than those of linguistic theories. Indeed, almost all the Approaches and Methods are based on psychological theory as well as on linguistics. Aside from psychological consideration that has been built into a certain Approach, studies on interaction are insightful in that they suggest a desirable outcome from such classroom activities as pair-work, group-work and teacher-student interaction. Concerning the significance of interaction in language learning, Ellis states that "the essence of an interactionist perspective is that interaction, interpersonal and intrapersonal, plays a major part in creating the conditions in which language acquisition (first and second) can take place." (Ellis, 1999: 30)

It seems that whether or not this psychological insight of the importance of interaction can be applied to classroom practice depends on the amount of interaction taking place among learners. Even if a teacher promotes this, a potential obstacle which hinders such interaction is the lack of vocabulary of learners. To this end, a list of words and expressions related to a topic would provide means for interaction. However, the list does not appear sufficient enough,

because students have difficulty in pronouncing the words on the list. In other word, learners cannot necessarily pronounce a word even if the word is in front of them.

In order to clear this predicament, pronunciation should be clearly shown in the list, represented not by the phonetic alphabet but by Japanese characters, *katakana*, which can be recognized easily by learners. Although there is some technical difficulty in using Japanese to represent English sounds because there is no exact one-to-one correspondence for many sounds, still introducing devised characters makes it possible to represent sounds found only in the English language. (See Appendix A for details.)

F. Summary

Syllabus objectives of an AOCA course gradually begin to take concrete shape by applying three types of Inputs. As regards "Other Inputs," environmental conditions influencing the course are taken into account. Arguments on "Linguistic Inputs" have led to employment of the functional/notional syllabus as a base. Finally, the significance of classroom interaction is suggested by "Psychological Inputs." The next step is to select detailed objectives and arrange them. In doing this, the basis for selection and arrangement is either how wide the discrepancy is between L1 and L2, and how high the surrender value is. In Chapter V, a proto-type syllabus will be presented.

V. A Proto Syllabus

The final step of the syllabus design is to arrange the objectives in the order they will be offered in the class and to synthesize them with sample activities. (See Appendix B) Following the argument in the previous chapter, objectives are represented by notions of functions. The target level of the syllabus is adjusted to the case study high school which is described in Chapter Ⅲ. (See p. 13) Accordingly, the framework consists of five units because the school calendar provides five time frames divided by two mid-term examinations and three final examinations.

A. Unit Contents

1. Unit One: Talks on an Individual life

(1) Allotment: 13 hours

(2) Contents:

Sections	Functions	Activities	Notes
1). Socialization	greeting,introducing oneself greeting in meeting people	model dialogue, pattern practice, pair-work, group-work	prosodics, titles examples of mis-communication
2). A family tree	describing relationships	group-work	including jobs and status
3). Likes and dislikes	expressing likes and dislikes inquiring about likes and dislikes	listening comprehension pair-work	logical representation of ideas
4). Schedule	reporting weekly schedule inviting someone to events expressing acceptance and rejection	individual work information gap activities role play	notion of time politeness clear answer - Yes/No
5). Telephone	inquiring schedule expressing proposals	model dialogue, pattern practice, pair work, role play	including expressions specific on the phone
6). Houses	describing a floor plan of a house	group work information gap activities	notion of space, cultural difference, prep. phrase
7). Sound practice ①		practice, pair-work	/l/ and /r/

2. Unit Two: Social Relations

(1) Allotment: 11 hours

(2) Contents:

Sections	Functions	Activities	Notes
1). Shopping	inquiring prices, sizes, etc.	model dialogue, listening comprehension, role play	notion of quantity politeness
2). Pictures	describing shape, color, etc.	listening comprehension, information gap activities	circumlocution prepositional phrases
3). Food	illustrating procedures describing Japanese food	listening comprehension, pair-work, presentation, writing, class discussion	time sequence cross-cultural awareness hedge words, deixis
4). Restaurants	ordering dishes inquiring about dishes getting payment done	model dialogue, pattern practice, role play, Interaction between Ts and Ss	politeness knowledge on systems of payment
5). Misunderstanding	getting things done expressing disapproval	multiple choice, class discussion, group work, role play	cultural differences, examples of miscommunication
6). Sound practice ②		practice, pair-work	four different /a/ sounds

3. Unit Three: Looking at the Outside World

(1) Allotment: 13 hours

(2) Contents:

Sections	Functions	Activities	Notes
1). Summer vacation	inquiring about summer vacation expressing satisfaction/ dissatisfaction	interaction between Ts and Ss, pair work	logical representation of ideas giving examples
2). Location	describing spatial notions giving directions to places asking for information	model dialogue, information gap activities, role play	prepositonal phrases
3). Geography	describing scales and numbers	group-work	world knowledge comparison

4). Travel	expressing intention, plans, hope describing procedures	listening comprehension, making a plan of a trip, presentation in a group	logical representation of ideas, connecting words
5). Gestures	expressing emotion and ideas	class discussion, dialogue with gestures, pair work	cultural difference examples of miscommunication
6). Sound practice ③		practice, pair work.	/th/ sounds, examples of miscommunication

4. Unit Four: Expressing Ideas and Emotions

(1) Allotment: 11 hours

(2) Contents:

Sections	Functions	Activities	Notes
1). Dubbing	expressing emotions	short recitation, simulation, practice, presentation of dubbing	prosodics, using a movie
2). Opinions	expressing agreement/ disagreement asking agreement/ disagreement	class discussion, exchanging opinions in groups	logical representation of ideas, prosodics
3). Advice	giving advice expressing opinions	listening comprehension, pair-work, presentation	Ann Landers, cross-cultural awareness
4). Safety	expressing fear or worry asking for help	group-work, model dialogue, listening comprehension	cultural awareness tips for safety in the U.S.
5). Illness	describing symptoms asking for advice	model dialogue, role play, interaction between Ss and Ts	Setting: hospital
6). Sound practice ④		practice, pair-work	/v/ and /f/ sounds

5. Unit Five: Opinions and Arguments

(1) Allotment: 14 hours

(2) Contents:

Sections	Functions	Activities	Notes
1). Stories	describing Japanese folktales	listening comprehension, pair-work	chronological order circumlocution
2). Judgements	expressing merits/demerits of thing expressing one's judgement	group-work, presentation pattern practice	logical representation of ideas
3). discussion	expressing opinions asking for agreement/ disagreement expressing agreement/ disagreement, reporting	model dialogue, pattern practice, role play, simulated discussion	topics are controversial issues logical representation of ideas
4). Sound practice ⑤		Jazz Chants	Intonation, rhythms

B. Customizing the Contents to Student Needs

The list of contents above belong in a proto syllabus to which modifications should be added by every teacher involved in the same ACOA course. In other words, the proto syllabus should be negotiated by teachers before it becomes a working syllabus. In spite of the laborious efforts that negotiation requires, this process is of significant meaning because it is expertise of teachers that projects students' needs, interests, and aptitudes into the working syllabus. The more analysis of students that is added to the syllabus, the more compatible the syllabus becomes with classroom situations.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

The prevailing system of the National Curriculum intends to offer the same quality of education to every individual student all over the county. However, in reality, the existence of diverse students and high schools of varying quality guarantees that this idealistic system cannot be realized. Within the actual system, the teacher is the only agent that can modify the objectives of learning to be suitable for classroom situations. Yet, because of the high quality of textbooks and engagement in other time-consuming school duties, teachers are liable to be unaware of the value of re-examining course materials.

When the new course, AOCA, was introduced, an unusual and untried feature broke the surface due to the fact that the course required an up-to-then unused approach toward language learning, namely, the enhancement and encouragement of communication in English language. Before then, the grammar translation method had still been prevalent at the classroom level. At that point, there was not much consensus and readiness for introducing new required courses at each high school level. Therefore, re-examining the course objectives from the perspective of paradigm shift became necessary.

Aside from the introduction of new methods, as Sasaki points out, both the "aim" and the "purpose" of English language education should be considered in discussing a syllabus. In his definition, the "aim," which is a process to approach the "purpose" of English language education, is communication, whereas the "purpose" of it is building up ability to think. Combining both the "aim" and the "purpose" results in the supreme purpose of education, namely, character building. (Sasaki, 1976) This perspective is closely related to the need for a philosophy to be developed by teachers, a subject discussed in Chapter Ⅲ. The presence of such "purpose," or philosophy, has made it possible to articulate the objectives of the syllabus at the working level.

The proto syllabus presented in the previous chapter is not a final product, but it rather serves as a basic plan for discussion. Opinions, suggestions, and alterations of other teachers should be taken into account and the syllabus accordingly can be modified. The process of modification is not only beneficial to teachers and learners, but will also contribute to the preparation for the new subject Aural/Oral communication Ⅰ, which is to be introduced in the fiscal year 2002.

Appendix A: Representing Pronunciation in Japanese Characters

A. Introductory notes

As a general rule, *katakana* will be used. For those sounds that are incompatible with Japanese sound system, the following artificial and devised symbols will be used.

a. vowels

(1) /ʌ/ - ア This sound is similar to Japanese "a" sound.

(2) /ə/ - ア Schwa sound is vague, so italicized "a" represent it.

(3) / a / - ア As one should open one's mouth vertically wider, a longer "a" represents it.

(4) /æ/ - エ Combination of "a," ア and "e," エ because of its sound.

b. consonants

(1) /v/ -/b/ v sound - *katakana* ヴ

b sound - *hiragana* ば び ぶ べ ぼ

(2) /th/ voiced - *hiragana* with an underline ざ じ ず ぜ ぞ

unvoiced - *katakana* with an underline さ し す せ そ

(3) l - r l - *hiragana* ら り る れ ろ

r - *katakana* ラ リ ル レ ロ

B. Examples

Words	Stress	Pronunciation
interesting	INteresting	インタアレスティング
happy	HAppy	ハエピイ
letter	LEtter	れタア
bathe	BAthe	ベイズ
surprise	surPRIse	サアプライズ

Appendix B: Sample activities for Unit 3: Looking at the Outside World

Example 1. Gestures

(1) The teacher asks students to present gestures which they think are universal.

(2) The teacher asks students to present gestures which they think only the Japanese can understand. [cross-cultural awareness]

(3) ALT introduces some gestures with which she was confused. [examples of misunderstanding]

(4) Dialogue with gestures: The teacher and ALT demonstrate a dialogue with gestures.

(5) Students practice in pairs.

Example 2. Drawing a picture.

(1) Listening and drawing: The teacher gives direction and students draw pictures.

e.g. "There is the sky and the ocean in the picture. So, draw a line across the paper. The top half is the sky. There are three large clouds floating in the sky. The bottom half is the ocean. There is a small island. Three birds are flying over the island.....

(2) [pair-work] Students compare their pictures in pairs. If there are any discrepancies between two pictures, they need to resolve them by talking to each other.

(3) [pair-work] The teacher gives each student one picture and a sheet of blank paper. (Each pair has two different pictures.) One student gives direction and the other draws a picture.

Example 3. Recommending a place to visit (Giving directions)

(1) Examples of miscommunication

e.g. A (an American): Excuse me, but can you tell me the way to the Hamamatsu Castle?

B (a Japanese) : (Mm. It's hard to explain.) I'm sorry but I can't speak English.

e.g. "If you turn light, you can see the castle."

(2) ALT asks students for help: "I'm planning to visit Kyoto next month. I hear you have been to Kyoto on your school trip in junior high school. Would you have some recommendation for the place to visit?"

(3) [groups of four] The teacher asks each group to choose two or three places, then to make an itinerary. They can use a map or a guide book if necessary.

(4) Presentation

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